

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

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EXPERT REPORT CONCLUDES: NO SAFE LEVEL OF RADIATION

Markey Continues Legislative Push to Examine Health Effects Near Nuclear Reactors

Washington, DC – Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, the panel that oversees the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), issued the following statement in response to the report released today by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) that concluded that there is no safe level of radiation exposure.

“Today’s report comes as no surprise to the many Americans living near nuclear reactors who have seen inexplicable increases in cancer cases in their communities,” said Rep. Markey. “It is my hope that this study will result in a renewed examination of whether it makes sense to build more nuclear reactors before we obtain more specific answers to this question, and that Republicans in Congress will cease their misguided opposition to the amendment I proposed to the Energy Bill that called for more study into this area. I plan to offer my amendment again when the Energy Bill reaches the House-Senate conference Committee.”

Rep. Markey began examining the question of whether individuals living near nuclear reactors might be at greater risk for radiation-induced cancers and other disorders when he was contacted by Cynthia Sauer, who along with her family used to live in Minooka, Illinois, which is located close to the Dresden nuclear power plant. The Sauer family recently relocated because of their concerns about the health impacts associated with living near the Dresden plant, which were heightened when their young daughter Sarah was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2001. Statistics obtained from the Illinois Department of Public Health indicate that in Grundy County, IL between 1995-99, the infant mortality rate has doubled, there has been a nearly 400% increase in pediatric cancer and a 38% increase in cancer among those aged 28-44 years old - while the same statistic for all of Illinois decreased by 8%. Moreover, other statistics show that the incidence of leukemia was 50% higher in men and 100% higher in women in Grundy County than it was in the rest of the State.

In light of their daughter’s brain cancer and armed with these statistics, the Sauers set out to get some answers from the NRC. To their dismay, they weren’t able to get any. In response to their correspondence and to correspondence the Congressman sent the Commission on this matter, the NRC repeatedly cited a 1990 National Cancer Institute (NCI) study entitled “Cancer in Populations Living Near Nuclear Facilities,” which has numerous flaws, and also failed to answer numerous specific questions related to the matter. Then, when Rep. Markey offered an amendment to the Energy Bill to create a \$10 million peer-reviewed grant program to study the problem, his amendment was rejected on a largely party line vote.

The study released by NAS today represents a 5-year effort to examine all available information related to the health effects associated with exposure to low levels of radiation. It concluded that even the “smallest dose has the potential to cause a small increase in risk to humans.”

For a copy of the correspondence between the NRC and Rep. Markey, please see
<http://www.house.gov/markey/>